

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 10411 170617Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----112741 170620Z /10
O 150938Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4890
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 10411

EXDIS DIST AS NODIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (LINE 18 PARA 3)

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM LEWIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PDEV IS XF
SUBJ: MESSAGE TO BEGIN ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

REF.: STATE 204867

1. COULD NOT IMMEDIATELY GET IN TOUCH WITH BEGIN LAST EVENING SINCE HE WAS STILL OUT OF COMMUNICATION AT HIS VACATION SPOT AND HIS OFFICE STAFF WERE ALSO OUT OF POCKET. EVRON OFFERED TO MAKE SURE YOUR MESSAGE WAS DELIVERED PROMPTLY FOR ME. AFTER RECEIVING TELEPHONE RECONFIRMATION FROM NEA THAT THE MESSAGE SHOULD BE DELIVERED UNCHANGED DESPITE CABINET ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, WE DELIVERED MESSAGE TO EVRON FOR FORWARDING AT APPROXIMATELY 1415 HOURS WASHINGTON TIME (2015 LOCAL) AUGUST 14.
2. EVRON HAS ASSURED ME THIS MORNING THAT MESSAGE INDEED WAS DELIVERED PROMPTLY TO BOTH BEGIN AND DAYAN. HE SAID YOU SHOULD BE RECEIVING BEGIN'S REPLY THROUGH THE
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ISRAELI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON SOMETIME TODAY, AUGUST 15.

3. ALL SECTORS OF PRESS AND POLITICAL SPECTRUM EXHIBIT FRUSTRATION AND EMBARRASSMENT OVER THIS LATEST EPISODE OF BEGIN GOVERNMENT'S INEPTITUDE IN DEALING WITH SETTLEMENTS QUESTION. RABIN TOLD ME YESTERDAY AT LUNCH THAT HE ATTRIBUTED UNBELIEVABLE MALADROITNESS TO A CONTINUING

DEFECT IN WAY IN WHICH BEGIN PRIME MINISTRY OPERATES. HIS THEORY WAS THAT DECISION WAS TAKEN JUNE 28 IN QUITE DIFFERENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE, COMING BEFORE MONDALE VISIT, WHEN AIR WAS FULL HERE OF SCENT OF IMPENDING US PRESSURE PLUS ALLEGED US EFFORT TO UNDERMINE BEGIN GOVERNMENT, AND AT MOMENT IN WHICH DIRECT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS SEEMED STALLED, PERHAPS PERMANENTLY. SETTLEMENTS IN JORDAN VALLEY ARE SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE BY ALL COALITION PARTIES, INCLUDING DMC, AND BY LABOR PARTY OPPOSITION AS WELL. APPROVAL ON THAT DATE THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING TO RABIN. (POINT HERE IS, OF COURSE, THAT SETTLEMENTS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE LABOR PARTY'S "ALLON PLAN" FRAMEWORK.) ENSUING WEEKS SAW POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC SITUATION SHARPLY CHANGE WITH MONDALE VISIT, LEEDS CASTLE TALKS, AND THEN DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAMP DAVID MEETING. RABIN BELIEVES IT LIKELY THAT FAILURE TO SUSPEND ANY IMPELEMENTATION OF JUNE 28 DECISION PRIMARILY REFLECTS LACK OF CAPACITY IN BEGIN'S IMMEDIATE STAFF TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON INTERFACE BETWEEN CHANGING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON ONE HAND AND OPERATIONS OF GOVERNMENT ON OTHER. THIS IS A MAJOR GAP WHICH HAS PRODUCED PREVIOUS ILL-COORDINATED ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM BEGIN GOVERNMENT, WHERE INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC CALENDAR AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL EVENTS FREQUENTLY SEEM TOTALLY UNCONNECTED IN MINDS OF BEGIN AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

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4. THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY OTHER EXPLANATIONS FOR EVENTS OF PAST FEW DAYS, SOME CONSIDERABLY MORE SINISTER. WE CAN NEVER FORGET THAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO CONTINUE SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK, WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL SHAPE OF A WEST BANK/GAZA ARRANGEMENT. AND SHARON IS UNDOUBTEDLY DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH MORE "FACTS" ON THE GROUND BEFORE THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS RINS HIM IN. NONETHELESS, RABIN HAS NO REASON TO APOLOGIZE FOR BEGIN, AND HIS HYPOTHESIS SEEMS MOST PROBABLE TO ME.

5. WHATEVER THE WHOLE EXPLANATION, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE GOI WAS HOPING TO KEEP THEIR JUNE 28 DECISION SECRET AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, AGAIN AS IN THE PAST MISCALCULATING THE OMNISCIENT CAPABILITY OF THE ISRAELI PRESS TO PENETRATE SUCH A STORY. GOVERNMENT THEN LOST CONTROL OF THE ISSUE AND MADE A TOTAL MESS OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT EVERYONE IS ANXIOUS TO SWEEP IT BACK UNDER THE RUG UNTIL AFTER THEY SEE WHETHER SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE COMES OUT OF CAMP DAVID.

6. WASHINGTON'S REACTION PUBLICLY THUS FAR TO THIS
DEPRESSING AFFAIR HAS BEEN JUST RIGHT. NO ONE HERE IS
UNDER THE SLIGHTEST ILLUSION AS TO OUR DISGUST AND
ANNOYANCE, BUT THE US REACTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN AS
IN ANY SENSE UNFAIR. HOPE WE CAN KEEP TO ABOUT THE
PRESENT LINE. LEWIS

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAND SETTLEMENT, WEST BANK, REPORTS, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, NEWS LEAKS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV10411
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: AS STATED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840137-1595, P780128-0685
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780861/aaaabzga.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1609f762-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 204867
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1732764
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MESSAGE TO BEGIN ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, PSDC, IS, XF, US, (BEGIN, MENACHEM), (BEGIN, MENAHEM)
To: STATE SS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1609f762-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014